

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4833

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT LOUIS 0881

DEPT PASS DOD AND CNO ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR MARR MP UR

SUBJECT: USSR SHIPS VISIT MAURITIUS

1. USSR HELICOPTER-CRUISER LENINGRAD, DESTROYER SKORYY, AND AUXILIARY CHILIKIN (TOTAL 181 OFFICERS, 925 PETTY OFFICERS AND SEAMEN) VISITED PORT LOUIS OCTOBER 14-19. VISIT RECEIVED EXTENSIVE PRESS, RADIO, TV COVERAGE HERE. SHIPS' OFFICERS AND MEN PARTICIPATED IN MANY PUBLIC RELATIONS EVENTS INCLUDING LAYING WREATH AT MEMORIAL TO LENIN IN LOCAL PARK, ASSISTING IN CUTTING SUGAR CANE, DONATING BLOOD AT HOSPITAL, PLAYING LOCAL TEAMS IN ATHLETIC EVENTS, PRESENTING ONE-HOUR VARIETY SHOW ON TELEVISION, ARRANGING VISITS FOR PUBLIC TO CRUISER AND DISTRIBUTING PUBLICATIONS TO VISITORS. PRIME MINISTER RAMGOOLAM HOSTED LUNCH IN HONOR OF LENINGRAD CO, CAPT. DVINDENKO, INVITED SENIOR SHIP OFFICERS TO DINNER IN HONOR OF NEW INDIAN AMBASSADOR, AND BOTH GOVERNOR GENERAL OSMAN AND RAMGOOLAM ATTENDED RECEPTION ABOARD LENINGRAD WHERE SHIP'S BAND AND DANCE TEAM PERFORMED FOR 100-ODD GUESTS. OCT. 17 MAURITIUS- USSR FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY HOSTED RECEPTION FOR DVINDENKO ATTENDED

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BY 200 GUESTS INCLUDING 50 OF SHIP'S CREW.

2. DVINDENKO, IN STATEMENT AT PRESS CONFERENCE, SAID QTE INDIAN OCEAN IS A PRINCIPAL ROUTE BETWEEN EAST AND WEST OF THE SOVIET UNION. ALSO THERE IS A ROUTE THROUGH THE SEA IN THE NORTH BUT IT IS IMPRACTICAL. THIS IS THE REASON WHY OUR SHIPS SAIL IN THIS OCEAN WHERE THEY HAVE NUMBER OF BASES OF FRIENDSHIP BUT NO MILITARY BASES. UNQTE AT THIS AND OTHER PRESS CONFERENCES, HE REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZED ALLEGED SOVIET DESIRE MAINTAIN PEACE IN INDIAN OCEAN.

3. SHIP SPOKESMAN NOTED THAT LENINGRAD HAD PARTICIPATED IN MINE-SWEEPING OPERATIONS IN GULF OF SUEZ FOR TWO MONTHS AT INVITATION OF EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT. AFTER SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING THAT OPERATIONS, LENINGRAD CAME TO MAURITIUS FROM ADEN. IT IS NOW ENROUTE BACK TO USSR VIA SENEGAL. HE SAID LENINGRAD CARRIES 700 MEN AND IS EQUIPPED WITH 16 HELICOPTERS ESPECIALLY DESIGNED FOR MINE DETECTION AND ANTI-SUBMARINE WARFARE.

4. COMMENT: SOVIETS PULLED OUT ALL STOPS IN ORDER TO MAKE VISIT A SUCCESS. VISIT APPEARS TO HAVE HAD CONSIDERABLE LOCAL PR IMPACT AND HEAVILY PREOCCUPIED MOST OF 18-MAN SOVIET EMBASSY STAFF. WE UNDERSTAND RAMGOOLAM PERSONALLY ORDERED FULLEST MEDIA COVERAGE OF SOVIET VISIT.
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